

Informant Charles Cummings &City I.D. 251MAYOR GibsonInterview No. 04Knowledgeables Interview TERM 1974-78

Page 1

I. Issues on the City Agenda and City Politics

1. I'd like you to think about the mayoral primary or general election campaign of 1974, the one in which Mayor Gibson defeated and (NAMES OF OPPONENT OR OPPONENTS). What were the major issues in the campaign and what did they involve?

Gibson had become the establishment by 1974. Crime was a constant issue, but beyond that there were no spectacular issues or personalities. The ~~clash~~ between Mayor and Council has been less, since about 1974 in part because the Council has been more black. It flipped over to a black majority in 1978. There is a challenge by the Spanish group, but there is a lack of Spanish leaders and lack of a Spanish press.

Knowledgeables Interview

2. Now, I'd like to ask you about which groups may have supported or opposed Mayor Gibson in that campaign of 1974. Could you tell me for each of these groups whether they were supporters of Mayor Gibson, opponents of his, indifferent, split, or whether you don't know.

(Field Directors: check responses)

Groups	<u>Supported</u>	<u>Opposed</u>	<u>Split</u>	<u>Indifferent</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>
a. labor leaders						X
b. minority groups	X					
c. Democratic Party						Y
d. Republican Party						X
e. city employees	X					
f. business leaders	X					
g. civic and public interest groups	X					
h. newspapers & media	X					
i. police	X					

PROBE: e.g. How did this support change over time?

- a. There haven't been outstanding labor leaders since Vincent Murphy who was a Mayor in the 1940s. Carol Graves of the Teachers Union is the most prominent union name, but her influence is limited to the school system. There were massive teachers' strikes and kids graduated without months of schooling in the early 1970s.
- b. In the 1974 election, Gibson was supported by the black population and by the liberal Italians of the North Ward.
- c & d. We can ignore the parties because each candidate is his own party. It seems that each councilman has to have astronomical salaries and staff in order to build his personal organization.
- e. Newark is loaded with personal name associations that are for the purpose of supporting the political careers of their founder and draw considerable support from city employees. There is a Kenneth Gibson spring picnic. City Council candidates have brunches to which city employees are invited. Charles Cummings, a head of a library division, has been sent tickets and called to ask if he were coming to those events. There has been no repercussions to his refusals. Once he went to a brunch to see what they were like. There were 2,000 people and gourmet Italian food at this one which was held for Councilwoman Villiani.
- f. Business leaders have stayed out. Prudential, for instance, preferred Gibson to anybody else. Business wanted to be left alone.

Knowledgeables Interview

3. We'd like you to use this list of issues to tell us how significant the local political leadership perceived these issues to be during Mayor Gibson's years in office. Please rank the issues on the scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means it was not an issue at all and 7 represents a very significant issue. (Field Director record scale responses.)

Issues

(very significant, not an issue)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|----------|
| a. transportation | <u>3</u> |
| b. energy | <u>1</u> |
| c. employment | <u>3</u> |
| d. public education | <u>6</u> |
| e. school desegregation | <u>1</u> |
| f. quality of municipal services | <u>4</u> |
| g. civil disorders | <u>1</u> |
| h. municipal budgetary and tax problems | <u>7</u> |
| i. crime | <u>6</u> |
| j. insuring a strong economic base | <u>3</u> |
| k. race and ethnic relations | <u>3</u> |
| l. corruption in city government | <u>3</u> |
| m. urban redevelopment | <u>4</u> |

PROBE: e.g. Tell me a little about why you thought _____ (the most significant issues) were important. How did they change over time?

- Public transportation is excellent, but there have been running problems with taxes. Otherwise nothing.
- Employment is more of a problem and less of an issue because the City can't do much about the lack of employment. There is also the aim and striving for minority employment, minority banks.
- The schools are in bad shape. State came to reorganize the school system in about 1975. The education system can't produce the quality people whom the businesses need as employees.
- No issue. There is complete segregation and no issue.
- Garbage collection, maintenance of parks are critical. Even the branches of the library are criticized.
- The Puerto Rican picnic was an incident in Branch Brook Park on Labor Day, 1974. The feeling was not that disorders were being threatened or an issue. We, as a city, have had it with civil disorders. People want no more of it.
- There has been a hurrah about the budget and chronic tax problems. There is the \$800,000,000 federal dole. (That is the figure brandied about.) Newark is on relief, or the Mayor has brought home the bacon. The facts can be seen 2 ways.

- i. The police layoffs in 1975 didn't create the stink that the 1979 layoffs did when they became the focus of a fear of crime campaign.
- j. There is agreement that there needs to be improvement, but considerable doubt about what can be done. The Economic Development Commission has done some development in the Meadowlands in the last 4-5 years. As a whole not much was done. In 1976, there was a Mayor's task force on tax exempt property, but nothing came of it. An aim was to get state aid in lieu of taxes on state owned buildings.
- k. A fundamental problem is that there has been an overemphasis on the ethnicity and race in Newark. When people in Newark talk about their city the first thing they do is talk about blacks, Italians, Puerto Ricans, Portuguese... There is no public racial denunciation as in the 1960s but race underlies everything. For instance, whenever I (Charles Cummings) have dined at one of the private clubs, they are filled with white businessmen. I have yet to see a black person who is not a waiter. There is not a black person on the staff of the Chamber of Commerce and until recently no Black members of the chamber.
- n. The attitude toward redevelopment has been "Do it but don't build it here." An example is that in 1976 the state wanted to build a prison in Iron Bound (near the airport), but it was defeated quickly and quietly. University city proposal turned down. The plan was to build near Rutgers and NJIT a complex of housing for faculty and students. Perhaps it would have been a threat to black political leaders, bringing in the white people. Earlier in the decade there were strong criticisms of roads cut in Newark. There is a feeling now that there are too many senior citizen highrise buildings.

Over the years, there has been large scale demolition and building of public housing. Columbus Homes is a cancer; it aggravated the problems of the middle class. A nice middle class community was driven down by Columbus Homes. The social experiment was to site middle class highrise next to public housing, both built in a neighborhood which during the last 15 years or so there have been questions about the purposes, organization and effectiveness of the Housing Authority.

was not able.
Danzig ran the Housing Authority with an iron fist. A feeling of people that the Housing Authority is a form of government that is not under control.

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 4

- 4a. Looking back on Mayor Gibson's administration, could you identify three of the major things he tried to accomplish while in office?
Basically it is difficult to think of major aims of Mayor Gibson.
1. Finding money, in new ways.

2. Promoting the city, improving the image of the city. You must realize that Newark has been a laughing stock for years. The local papers play up the image of Newark as a terrible place and of the city government as completely incompetent. For instance, recently there was a newspaper article about how thieves were ripping up the streets of Newark and the city was too dumb to stop them. What was happening was that some people from out of town brought in a truck and dug up the cobblestones in one area. Quality cobblestones command a good price now. The thrust of the article was not on how low the thieves stooped, but on how stupid Newark was for letting it happen.

3. Trying to cater to the needs of the certain large groups, such as Senior Citizens.

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 5

4b. How successful was he in accomplishing each of them?

1. Gibson has been widely regarded as successful at pulling in federal money. In Gibson's 1st term he levied a 1% payroll tax and some companies used that as an excuse to leave the city. When Ballentine left, people said that the Ironbound section would be economically destroyed, but it wasn't. The payroll tax later was reduced to 1/2%. The City tried but failed to get a head tax at the airport.
2. Gibson felt he accomplished something. There is a feeling that Gibson's administration is honest, although bumbling. Of any of the white people who might have gotten elected, would not have improved the reputation. On the range of other aspects, the Harper's article, January 1975, crystalized the views of people about Newark, because it was called the worst city.
3. He could get federal money for housing for elderly. There were both public and privately sponsored buildings. What has been lacking ^{during} Gibson's terms is having an affair with business community. It seems that Gibson has made no effort to woo the business community. There are cases of companies asking for something and threatening to move, then Gibson would watch them move. (When Westinghouse had its strike in 1979, Gibson did nothing and it was the Governor who pleaded with them not to leave Newark,

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 6

5a. There are lots of ways a mayor can exercise influence. Let me read you a few statements, and you tell me--again by using a 1-7 point scale, whether the statement was definitely true about Mayor Gibson during this time in office or definitely not true. Use 7 if the statement is definitely true and 1 if it is definitely not true. (Field Director record scale responses).

- a. The mayor could easily work his will in the city council. 5
- b. The mayor effectively controlled the department heads in the city government. 6
- c. The mayor was a very effective grantsperson in getting money from the federal and state governments. 6
- d. The mayor had excellent relationships with the local business community. 4 and declining since 1974.
- e. The mayor could command media attention any time he wanted it. 6

a. He did better in his second term because the City Council changed, too.

b. (The only problem that the Mayor had with administrators was his business manager, Bodine, who was a Midwestern City Manager who had different ideas on management. See his parting shot.)

d. Business and the Mayor were indifferent to each other.

e. Bruno Associates helped Gibson in all campaigns.

Knowledgeables Interview

6a. Now, let's talk about Mayor Gibson's overall power and influence in the city. Some mayors--like Richard J. Daley, for example--seemed to be real powerhouses in their city, able to get things done. Others seem to be almost a cipher in city politics, never really able to affect events or to shape policies their own way. Again using a 7 point scale, where 7 is a powerhouse and 1 is a cipher, where would you put Mayor Gibson? (Field Director record scale response)

Scale Response 5

PROBE: e.g. How did the power of the mayor change over the time of his administration?

The Mayor is not a bully, his style is polite. The form of city government of Mayor and Council would give considerable power to anyone in the Mayor's office. Gibson has gone some what beyond that. We don't know what constraints there may have been on him.

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 10

7. Thinking about people like Hubert Humphrey, Jacob Javits, and George McGovern as liberals, and people like Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan as conservatives, where would you put Mayor Gibson's own political stance during this period. On the scale provided, 7 represents a liberal stance and 1 is a conservative stance. (Field Director record scale response).

Scale response 4

PROBE: e.g. What were some of the reasons you classified him this way? Did he seem to get more liberal or more conservative as his incumbency went on?

As far as policies are concerned, he is liberal in a conventional sense because of the type of people in Newark. In the period 1976-78 fiscal conservatism was important. Gibson can't be put on this scale because it is almost as though he is a spectator, not a participant in government. He appears to be non-political. He is not doctrinaire.

Knowledgesbles Interview

Page 11

Interviewer: If not plainly and widely known ask #8

8. Do you happen to know if the mayor was a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent?

He has backed Byrne for Governor and now backs Carter.
Usually he backs the winners.

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 12

9. Now let's talk about race relationships in your city during this time. Were there any particular issues around which racial conflict evolved? If so, what were they?

he has tended to loose the support of the Hispanic community. Education issues were racial during Gibson's first term and not so now. The City Council was 4 out of 9 black, the heads of all City agencies were black with the exception of the library, the museum and a couple of other small departments. So what else is there to do?

Knowledgeables Interview

10. Now, I'd like to direct your attention to the activities of various groups in the city political system at this time. In particular, I'd like to ask you to focus on four issues often faced by city governments.

--first, the problem of economic development, things like urban redevelopment, downtown revitalization, attracting industry, economic growth, and jobs

--second, the problem of minority jobs with the city government

--third, the city budget and problems like tax rates, spending priorities, and which agencies got support

--fourth, the efforts of the city to get grants and other aid from the state and federal government

Taking these four areas, I'd like you to assess the influence of various groups. Assign each of these groups a score from 1 to 7. Let 7 stand for a group whose support was indispensable to getting anything done in that area, or whose opposition was certain to kill any action. Let 1 stand for a group which had absolutely no influence or impact in that policy area.

(Interviewer: Hand informant the attached list asking him/her about each group's influence. Field Director record responses)

*See following page for recording responses.

Knowledgeables Interview

Question #10

	<u>economic development</u>	<u>minority hiring</u>	<u>budgetary policies</u>	<u>grants/federal and state</u>
<u>Groups</u>				
a. labor leaders	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
b. minority groups	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
c. political parties	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
d. the mayor	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
e. business leaders	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
f. municipal employees	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
g. neighborhood groups	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
h. civic, public interest groups (e.g. the League of Women Voters)	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
i. the police chief	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
j. newspapers & the media	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
k. other				
b. There are black owned firms that have been fairly successful in the city. There is a listing called the "Black Pages" in which black owned firms are listed. There seems to be little public pressure on budget issues.				
i. The Mayor exercises considerable power on the City's minority hiring. He wants hiring to be of black people who are residents.				
e. Business has had some influence on taxes, keeping them low.				
f. The municipal employees are not a powerful organization. There has been few strikes or threats of strike other than teachers in the 70-74 period.				
g. Some neighborhoods are very well organized. North Ward, East Ward, and Central Ward, groups speak up at City Council Meetings. In the North Ward the property owners are speaking up for lower taxes. In the Central Ward apartment renters are speaking up for neighborhood improvements, such as a new Boys' Club. The East Ward people have a different set of values being				

recent immigrants. Interests of businesses are expressed more often in the East Ward than elsewhere. Among the Portuguese there are some wealthy people as well as poor ones. The Ironbound Manufacturers Association has sponsored an open store event, a "City" activity in their area. There is a feeling in the East Ward that they are supporting the rest of the city. The South Ward's head and falling apart.

An example of the power of community groups is what happened to two trucks parked in the North Ward. The trucks were Legge trucks driven by petite women. After the trucks were parked on the street for a few nights, the neighbors began to complain that they were eyesores. The women did not move the trucks. The neighbors kept telling the women to move the trucks, but they didn't. Then the tires were slashed. Still the trucks were not moved. Then they mysteriously burned and exploded.

- h. It is hard to identify things that civic groups have done. Some civic groups deliberately stay away from political issues. Newark used to have 5 Kiwanis Clubs, but now there are 3 which have a few old members.
- i. In 1971, there was a cadet program that was well publicized and well received, but nothing since.
- j. Since the death of the Newark, the media has been much less influential. The Newark wanted to be influential, but the Star Ledger does not now. The museum, the big churches feel that they are not covered by the Star Ledger. Only the Star Ledger has any possibility of influence, as there is no local TV station.

11. Power is distributed in many different ways. We've listed some of them on this list. Understanding it is very difficult to make broad generalizations, please tell us for each description where your city would rank on the 7 point scale. On the scale, 7 represents the position closest to the description as it is printed and 1 means the city does not fit the description at all.

- a. Important local decisions were made by a lot of different types of groups such as civic, labor, business, and city officials, and others. Each group protected its own turf and could usually prevent policies they disliked. 4
- b. Basically it was the mayor and other elected officials who really ran things. Very little happened that the mayor didn't push for. 5
- c. The professional administrators, department heads, and civil servants in city agencies really ran things. The city bureaucracies were more powerful than everyone else. 3
- d. Actually, big business people really ran the government here. They were the heads of the largest corporations and dominated the local political structure. Things went pretty much the way they wanted. 1

(Field Director record scale responses)

PROBE: e.g. How would you say that the structure of power in Newark (city) has been changing recently? Did it seem to change over the period of Mayor Gibson's years in office? In what ways?

- c. The city clerk's office may have a lot to do with the running of the city. The city clerk can get things attended to. For instance, kids had broken 2 fire hydrants and calls to the fire department got nothing done. Then the Asst. City Clerk called the private number of the fire chief and got immediate attention to the spouting hydrants.

Knowledgeables Interview

II. Crime and Police Issues on the City Agenda

12. Focusing specifically on the areas of crime and law enforcement, here is a list of issues that are sometimes faced by cities. How significant were these issues to the city's political leadership during Mayor Gibson's term. Please use our 7 point scale, where 1 is not an issue and 7 represents a very significant issue. (Field Director record scale responses)

Issues

(very significant, not an issue)

- a. violent crime 5
- b. property crimes 5
- c. organized crime 2
- d. narcotics 4
- e. police unionization 2
- f. racial unrest 1
- g. police relations with minority communities 2
- h. police corruption 2
- i. backlog of criminal courts 1
- j. jail conditions 1
- k. police brutality 2
- l. juvenile gangs 1

PROBE: e.g. Tell me a little about why you thought (the very significant issues) were important issues. Are there some things which are not on this list which seemed to be pretty important during this period?

- c. People think of organized crime as folk crime. For instance, someone will say, "The Campis live around the corner."

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 18

13. Thinking back to the Mayor's years in office, did anything extraordinary happen that you recall regarding law enforcement with regard to the states attorney's office, the courts, or the jails? If so, what was it?

a. states attorney's office

No

b. the courts

No

c. the jails

No

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 19

14. Was there anything about the police department which was ever a source of controversy during this time? If so, please explain.

Layoffs and manpower were issues. General effectiveness is an ongoing question not a special controversy. There are comments unfavorable to Director Williams in the City Council, starting with members of the public. The critiques of Williams are no more than the critiques of the Superintendent of Education.

Knowledgeables Interview

15. During this time, do you recall any major litigation involving or affecting the way your city approached any of its problems? (Field Director: Probe for the name of the case and what it was about)

The Board of Education was being sued by the Wilson supplies for non-payment of past bills for 2 years. The city has a bad reputation for not paying its bills. We have personally experienced trying to rent a hall on behalf of the public library and being asked to prepay.

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 21

Biographical Notes:Date of Interview January 16, 1968Name of Informant Charles Cummings, Director of the New Jersey room of the Newark Public Library and Robert Blackwell, Librarian in the New Jersey Room.

(Interviewer: Include the following: current position and address, past positions as relevant to his/her selection as informant, other relevant information)

Mr. Cummings and Mr. Blackwell have served as reference librarians in the New Jersey room of the Newark Public Library for more than a decade. Their work with newspaper clippings and their handling of a vast array of reference questions on the city, has developed their detailed knowledge of the workings of the city.

Knowledgeables Interview

Note: This question must be answered for each interview.

Were there any confidentiality issues raised? YES _____ NO _____

If YES, please specify.

Knowledgeables Interview

Page 23

EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW

(Interviewer: Include the following: Rate the completeness and accuracy of recall in general of the informant, and include in your assessment any items (specific questions in the interview) where the information obtained from the informant is inconsistent with known information. What limitations should we place on any of these responses? Please note specific questions where appropriate.)

As far as I could tell, the concentrated work which Charles and Bob did in reading newspaper clippings for the GRC project, did not bias their assessments of the importance of the crime problem. That possible bias had been my only concern; their judgments are well balanced. They give Mayor Gibson consistently more credit for being powerful than I would.